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Pulpit Preaching

VOL. XI, No. 7 JULY, 1958

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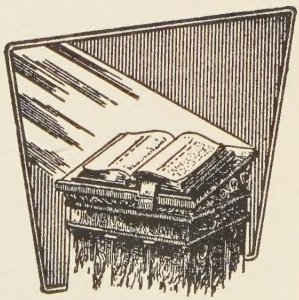

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

This month's first theme, "On Growing Old," is included in response to letters from two readers, each writing within a few days of the other. The first letter said that the writer had never found substantial homiletic resources on the spiritual aspects of old age. The second letter noted that in the writer's congregation were many older persons, and that he hoped in various ways to minister to their particular needs. The sermons in this issue, however, have a pertinence which is not limited to one age group.

The second theme, "Old Testament Personalities," does not include biographical sermons, but rather situations and decisions in which a single figure is dominant.

Next month's themes will be "Thoughts for Summer" and "Great Words of Faith: Eternal Life," a group of messages which center in Christ's conversation with the Rich Young Ruler.

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

In God We Trust is an anthology of the religious beliefs and affirmations of the American Founding Fathers, including Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton and Jay, selected from many sources with a running commentary by Norman Cousins. The architects of America were men of various persuasions and convictions, but throughout their writings are many common spiritual emphases. This book makes vivid and under-

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WORTH QUOTING

Selected by E. Paul Hovey, The Federated Churches, Lewiston, Idaho

A backwoods community had a reputation for not keeping its ministers for more than three or four months. Finally the bishop sent a young preacher, and after two years he was still on the job. Surprised, the bishop pressed for an explanation.

Finally, a local townsman replied: "Well, I'd rather not tell you; but if you insist, here's the reason: We folks out here don't really want any preacher at all, and he's the closest we've come to it."

* * *

If a child has admiration and respect for his parents, he will express it. If he is grateful for what his parents have done and are now doing for him, he will express it. If he hurts his parents' feelings or fails . . . he will say he is sorry . . . In a measure this suggests what our relationship to our Heavenly Father should be.

Prayer should be just like breathing — a constant response to a life-giving God who is closer to us than our own breath. It should include the main elements of a fine relationship between a child and his parent . . . such is an effective way to pray.

—James A. Pike

* * *

Other people too were caught up in my rebellion. Grief fanned into flame my resentment against all those who had known of Peter's heart condition and yet had persisted in heap-

(Continued on page 30)

Pulpit Preaching

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On Growing Old

ADDING LIFE TO OUR YEARS

Nenien C. McPherson, Jr., Grace Methodist Church, Dayton, Ohio

In a large southern city on a high hill stands an old house that was once very beautiful. The house is more than a hundred years old and one can imagine that in days gone by there was much joy and happiness experienced there. Despite its lovely lines, its dignified iron copings and its high ceilings — the grandeur of this house and the family that has lived in it belong to the past. All the carpets are gone, as is the fine furniture which would now be valuable antiques. There is an old metal bed in one room, a cheap wooden bed in each of two others.

Three people lived in the house in recent years, a brother and two sisters — all unmarried, all deaf, all above seventy years of age. One of them died of starvation. Family pride and determination never to sell the ancestral home prevented them from securing the help that was available. The sister who died first spent her last few months in the county hospital; taken there by the health authorities. The two who were left lived in the huge house completely apart. They seldom spoke to each other. Through the years there had developed suspicion and bitterness, hatred and jealousy; they did not prepare or eat their meals together. Each cooked on the coal grate in the bedroom where the days and nights were spent alone. Communication was difficult and not desired; outsiders remained outside — except for the minister, and he was welcomed only by the man. None of the three had a church affiliation for years. There is a little house on the back of the property, the rent from which paid the taxes and provided a little food.

The people who lived in this house had one thing only — years. They had one dimension of life and that was length — the past and a limited future. There was no breadth, no depth, no height.

Twenty-five years ago the newspapers carried the story of Ralph Barton, spoken of at that time as America's most gifted caricaturist. He began his career on a newspaper in Kansas City, moved from there to New York and became the feature cartoonist and caricaturist of **The New Yorker.** Ralph Barton had committed suicide. He left a letter with the request that it be published. It said in part:

"I have had few real difficulties. I have had, on the contrary, an exceptionally glamorous life, as life goes, and I have had more than my share of affection and appreciation. The most charming, intelligent and important people I have known have liked me, and the list of my enemies is very flattering to me. . . . I have run from wife to wife, from house to house and from country to country in a ridiculous effort to escape from myself. . . . No one thing is responsible for this [suicide] and no person — except myself. . . . I did it because I am fed up with inventing devices for getting through twenty-four hours a day."

Thus he reveals the complete exhaustion of his inner resources. Life had only one dimension for Ralph Barton, just length — no breadth, no depth, no height!

How different a person was Jesus. If you ask the important question about the life of Jesus, you never ask how long he lived. He never traveled outside his small country of Palestine; he read few books and did not have a college education. There is not, on the surface, much that is very significant about his life. Yet we ask the wrong question if we ask, "How long did Jesus live?" The right question is, "How much did he live? How much did he put into every day of his life?"

Think of the joy Jesus found in just being alive. He begins his ministry by going to a wedding reception; he enjoyed his friends; good food always appealed to him apparently and especially the social joys of meal time. He was not a hermit; he was not ascetic; he did not, like John the Baptist, live in a desert, clothed in a few skins. Jesus found joy in the ordinary everyday events of life, the birds that fly through the air, the fields freshly sown and the growing crops — a symbol of God's renewing of the earth and his provision for all his creatures He took joy in helping the needy — those sick in body or mind or soul were always a challenge to Jesus. He could never pass them by. Some woman merely touched the hem of his garment in the crowd and he was conscious of her faith and that faith had power within it to make her whole again.

We do not ask how long Jesus lived, but how much. For God was the dimension of his life that made him what he was and it is that which all of us need for life to be meaningful and significant. Years are not enough; there must be added breadth and depth and height. Jesus added all these dimensions through companionship with God. We must learn of him if we are to add "life to our years" also.

Jesus is constantly talking about life. It is not life off yonder somewhere — though he believed that life that began here was so precious to the individual and to God that it could have no ending, that it was eternal in its duration. The most important thing for Jesus was the quality of the life which one might have even here and now if he were willing to meet the conditions. Not length of life but quality of living was Jesus' basic desire for men. So he says: "I have come that they (men, women and little children) may have life . . . to the full" (John 10:10).

Religion for Jesus, therefore, was never a burden; it was a joy. It did not consist of the keeping of the minute details of an external code — that would make life miserable — but rather religion was a liberation from the letter that killeth to the spirit which giveth life. Goodness was natural and spontaneous with him; it wasn't a calculated goodness. It was right conduct springing forth from a right inner spirit. Jesus never thought of religion as a weight we had to carry on our backs — a packet of beliefs and practices that we had to observe for fear we might end in the wrong place when life is finished. For him religion was not a weight, but wings — wings that carry us along rather than something we are forced to carry.

How can we add life to our years? How can we secure that more abundant life which the Master desired for all his followers?

We must add **breadth** to length. How wide are our interests? Are we still growing? For any living thing continues to grow; that is one of the definitions of life. That thing which no longer grows is dead. That thing which continues to grow is alive. Growth is the surest sign of life. There is no greater satisfaction in life than to continue to grow in one's interests, in the things one appreciates, in the things one enjoys. Not only to grow but to know that we are growing and to know that out beyond us there is more room for

growth than we can ever achieve here. So Browning urges us, in "Bishop Blougram's Apology": "Never leave growing till the life to come."

William Allen Neilson, when president of Smith College, attended many alumnae meetings. After one of these he came home quite discouraged and wrote a friend: "When I listen to the talk of men and women who are college graduates, one wonders how they passed any of the examinations. Their talk today gives no evidence of even a faint interest in the things of the mind. It makes one wonder what happened to those eager and alert young minds I saw unfolding before me. So many college graduates are dull and drab and deadly uninteresting; they stop growing." That is tragically true. All too many people have length — only years — with no breadth of interest or understanding, no desire really to add life to their years. Growth requires imagination and a curiosity that is never satisfied.

Breadth of life is added by significant work also. The man who does not find joy in the work he is doing is in the wrong vocation, or has the wrong attitude toward work. We ought to find in the thing to which we give most of our time our best chance to widen our interests and make it easier for others to find pleasure in living with us.

Breadth of life is added by appreciation of real art and fine music. Such appreciation can be cultivated. It comes also through the reading of great books. A friend in Memphis has in recent years read most of the great classics and feels these have been the best years of his life. He has given his nights, not to the television or radio or the movies — valuable as these may be — but he has given his nights to great books. He had been living with the great minds of all ages and adding an enduring quality to his own life. Now he is blind but he continues to enjoy great books through a steady stream of records from the Library of Congress, a government service to the blind. Thus, he continues to broaden his sphere of knowledge and has saved himself from rebellious bitterness and self-pity. In the process he has enriched the life of his family and friends.

One can find breadth of life in becoming a part of a great cause. It may be through participating in the world-wide program of the Church — a program that will not be completed during his lifetime, but which holds the greatest hope for peace and brotherhood in the future. It may be through volunteer service at one of our hospitals, or by visiting shut-ins, or inviting newcomers to the community into fellowship with one's church.

Arthur Christopher Benson had a dream one night and imagined he was dead. After floating around here and there, trying to get located in his new life, he finally moved into a very pleasant place, where flowers were growing and where everything was clean and beautiful. There were nice dwellings and pleasant people sitting all around. They were just sitting — eating delicious food and sipping their drinks. There was no work to be done, no hardships to be endured, no problems to be solved. No one needed any help. Surely he was in heaven. Suddenly he was aware that he was not in heaven, but in hell. Hell means stagnation, the end of growth, the end of striving, the end of achieving, the end of sharing and service and all the rest. Heaven and hell are not so much places as conditions of the human spirit. We enter heaven or hell here. The kind of life and spirit within us determines the kind of life we could endure in the world to come.

"Never leave growing till the life to come" — and then will come new opportuntities for growth and understanding and appreciation which are beyond the realm of our imagination at present.

Growing means something else. It

means outgrowing some of our old conceptions; it means becoming aware of our prejudices, our blind spots, our lack of understanding of people who are different from us. It means outgrowing a lot of our reaction-habits and our attitudes and our emotional instability. It means growing into a better understanding of life and other people and seeking an opportunity to serve.

II

We must add **depth** to length and breadth of life if we are going to get the most out of it. How fixed are our purposes and intentions? How deep are our loyalties? How enduring is our commitment?

Montaigne, the sixteenth century French philosopher and essayist, reminds us: "The archer must first know what he is aiming at, and then set his hand, his bow, his string, his arrow, and his movements for that goal. Our plans go astray because they have no direction and no aim. No wind serves the man who has no port of destination."

There must be a sense of direction, a fixed purpose which guides and inspires our behavior. Such a purpose comes with a deepening of one's understanding of life, the sinking of the roots of one's loyalties and commitments — so that they are not shaken by the changes of time. There must always be respect for the rights of others and their freedom to think freely for themselves. One should exercise this right for himself so that there will emerge a minimum of convictions which are his because he understands them and has personally wrought them out.

We need to be short on condemnation of others and long on understanding. We must avoid, however, as one of the greatest dangers in life, the kind of shallow tolerance which indicates the absence of foundational convictions. There must be for every man something he loves so much, some evils he hates so intensely, some cause in which he believes so sincerely that he is willing to serve it and even to die for it if necessary. This deep commitment adds life to our years.

III

We must add **height** to length and depth and breadth of life. How high are our standards and our ideals? To what do we aspire? For what do we hope? For what do we long? What is the thing that means the most to us? To what are we willing to give ourselves during the years we have on this earth?

We are not only what we are, but what we may become. We become like that to which we give ourselves, that which we love most.

An intriguing story in the New Testament is that of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus, seeking to add life to his years. His question was: "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus reminded him to keep the commandments, that was the answer any rabbi would have given him. The young man, as well as Jesus, was conscious of the fact that something was missing, something preventing his full participation in life. His blind spot was that money meant too much to him. Now, money is not an evil thing in itself. There is nothing wrong with desiring and planning to "make" money, to be successful in one's business or profession. There is no danger if one throws an adequate safeguard around his acquisitive spirit so that he can be certain that money does not become his master but remains his servant. The Christian way to do that is by adopting some form of proportionate giving — a tenth, a fifth, or even a half if our income is very large. We need to accept life and all it brings as a stewardship, sharing with those who need what the Lord has given us, not only because of their need but because of our need to remain free of greed and self-indulgence. If material possessions become our chief

concern, we will not add life to our years, for life is lifted or lowered by that to which we give ourselves. All too often we are "possessed" by our possessions so that we are afraid to really live and enjoy life because life is made by owning things and would be lost by their disappearance.

Who has known heights and depths, shall not again
Know peace — not as the calm heart knows
Low, ivied walls; a garden close;
The old enchantment of a rose.

And though he tread the humble ways of men,
He shall not speak the common tongue again.
Who has known heights, shall bear forevermore
An incommunicable thing
That hurts his heart, as if a wing
Beat at the portal, challenging;

And yet — lured by the gleam his vision wore, —
Who once has trodden stars seeks peace no more.

He will never know peace any more, for he will be shaken out of his complacency, he will be restless for things which he has not yet possessed, he will have a great hunger to broaden his interests, to deepen his commitments, to reach up higher in terms of the things to which he aspires. He will not have a static peace, but such a one will have added breadth and depth and height to length and, thus, he wil lhave added life to his years.

HOW TO GROW OLD GRACEFULLY

Jack B. North, University Avenue Methodist Church, Peoria, Illinois

Do you remember how eagerly you, as a youngster, looked forward to a birthday? It was not only an opportunity to receive presents but a chance to draw yourself up a little taller in your effort to be "grown-up." In those early years you would never tell a person you were six when really you were six and one-half. You counted the days until you would be 16, then 18, and would be treated as a full grown adult. Do you remember when 30 seemed to be a ripe old age and anyone 40 was ancient! But, then quickly, all too quickly, the years have come and gone. Birthdays are no longer a time of rejoicing. At 40 we haven't yet gotten a good start at this business of living.

But somewhere along the way we begin to realize that the years do move on at an unrelenting pace, and the older we grow the faster that pace becomes. It is curiously strange, is it not, how we can live with a self-evident truth so long and never really accept it for ourselves! People grow older. Of course. But I — never! Then your friends begin to make comments concerning the changing color of your hair at more frequent intervals.

Or perhaps the awful truth comes to you much as it did to Dr. Everett W. Palmer, who in writing on this subject in **Together,** says: "It happened with shocking suddenness several years ago when during a basketball game on the YMCA court I was dribbling down the court, picturing myself as zipping along with the old-time speed and cunning. Then, a player — fifteen years-younger — came up behind me. 'Well, come on Gramp,' he called, 'Let's go!' Then I realized that Everett Palmer was growing old."

The fact is, however, that this whole matter of aging is not going to be a problem for a lot of us if we don't begin living a saner pace. Invariably when a person from another part of the world is asked to give his impressions of America and Americans his answer is: "You live so fast." A member of the congregation

was telling me sometime ago of hearing a Mexican address a convention of bankers. He characterized the difference between Mexico and America in this manner: A Mexican tells a friend that he has just taken a trip. The friend asks him: "What did you see?" But an American takes a trip and tells his friend. The friend asks him: "How long did it take you?" And that is the difference.

In an old issue of **Rotarian** is an article entitled, "How Long Do You Want to Live?" It asked some pertinent questions. Among them were these:

1. While waiting for a bus, do you paw the ground and pace the pavement? Subtract ten years!

2. Do you run upstairs?—Begin to get estimates on a new heart right away—they are in short supply. You might have to manage with the one you have just worn out!

3. Do you have several extra money-making activities besides your regular job? Good. You'll need the extra money to support you during your last lingering illness.

4. Do you blow your top at the slightest provocation? Well, it's your blood pressure—enjoy it!

5. Do you play tennis on a hot afternoon as you did when you had hair? Keep enough ready cash on hand for your wife to buy a black outfit on short notice. She is going to need it!

6. Do you manage on just a few hours sleep a night? Don't worry. The cemetery is a restful place. You will have plenty of time to catch up there.

7. Do you eat when you want and what you like without thought to calories and vitamins? Hospitals have a long waiting list, so make your reservations early in order that you may enjoy their blue plate Pablum special when your stomach doesn't cooperate any longer.

For any of us to whom the above advice is pertinent, this sermon will be a waste of time. But to the rest of us, who are seriously trying to order our living in such a way that we can enjoy the luxury of aging, then what is said may be helpful.

For the fact is that more people are living longer today than ever before! This is in spite of the feverish pace of modern life. In 1690, 33.5 years was a normal life expectancy. In 1920, it was 56 years. By 1930, it had risen to 60. And by 1975, sociologists predict that it will be 78. Dr. E. Bortz recently told a medical convention in New York that in the not too distant future man could expect to count 100 years as a normal life expectancy.

For some people this miracle of science is a blessing. It will give them added opportunity to do those things that in a shorter span of years they could never accomplish. But, there are others to whom it would be a bane. The years even now are empty and fruitless. To add to their years would be to prolong their misery.

So the question which confronts us is a simple one — even though the answer may not be so easy to come by. How can we manage this affair of living in such a way that our lives may be a continuing inspiration to others and a lasting source of satisfaction for ourselves. How can we grow old gracefully?

That it can be done, we all agree. Too many have done it for us to settle back and say "old age is simply that last hour when we must sit round waiting for the eviction notice to be served." Quite to the contrary. At 83 Tennyson penned "Crossing the Bar." Wesley was still preaching across England at 88. At 83 Albert Schweitzer works day and night in his hospital in Africa.

The ancient Psalmist must have been aware of the choice ever before us when, at the end of a long and busy life, he penned those immortal words: "The days of our years are threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore years; yet is their pride but

abor and sorrow; for it is soon gone, nd we fly away."

Then he added: "So teach us to umber our days, that we may apply ur hearts unto wisdom." This wisdom of which the Psalmist speaks must necessarily include certain basic ssumptions about life itself, if hrough it we are to grow old gracefully. Consider with me, briefly, three f these assumptions that are the beginning of wisdom.

I

Every Life Has Its Purpose. A sense f purpose is essential to living. When urpose is gone we stop living and tart existing. Animals are made to xist, but not man. The man who has ost a purpose for living inevitably lies!

Some years ago Western Electric ested the effect of lighting on production in factories. The results confounded the experts. It wasn't what hey expected. When light was increased, production in the test room ncreased. That was according to plan. But when the light was reduced, even below the normal standard, production increased again. Why? To answer that question they extended their experiments. Instead of decreasing he light, they decreased working ours. Production increased. They engthened rest periods. Production went higher. Then they reversed the process. Workers in the test room oiled forty-eight hours a week with o rest periods. Production remained as high as ever.

The experiment seemed to be an utter failure. That is, until Dr. Roethlisberger of Harvard Business School studied the results and pointed out he simple fact that every worker in he test room felt that he was a part of a significant experiment, not just a worker on the line. Given this added sense of personal significance — that their toil had meaning — they responded by doing a better job even under adverse conditions.

As long as what we do has meaning, the passing of the years is not frightening. It is when because of retirement or other factors that accompany age we are put on the shelf, and life loses its purpose, that the days begin to drag and the years become a burden!

But this need not be! If through the years we have made adequate preparation through the broadening of our areas of interest and the deepening of our level of concern, old age will not be a time of retirement but an opportunity of advancement into areas of life which heretofore we have not had the chance to explore.

Age is a quality of mind. If you
have left your dreams behind,
If hope is cold, if you no longer
look ahead,
If your ambitions' fires are dead
— then you are old!

But if from life you take the best
and if in life you keep the
jest
If love you hold; no matter how
the years go by,
No matter how the birthdays fly
— you are not old!

II

If the first assumption of wisdom is that every life has its purpose, the second assumption is this: Every age has its reward.

Some of the unhappiest people I know are either those who are striving to resurrect a dead past or those who are madly rushing ahead toward an uncertain future and all the while failing to lay hold upon the moment and enjoy it to the fullest! You know people like that. They are always telling you about the good old days. You run into them quite frequently at Homecoming Time in Any Fraternity House. They are the eternal undergraduates. They never get through telling you how they ran around left end for 30 yards. Coleridge had a line for it: "And still I am a child tho' I grow old."

Equally tragic is that person who

keeps postponing until tomorrow the time when he will really begin living. As a child he will accoplmish great things when he goes to high school. The high schooler longingly looks forward to college. The college student eagerly awaits graduation, and the start of business and the establishment of a home. Then when he "gets ahead," becomes successful, he will be able to do the things he had always planned. Then it is retirement that he looks forward to. But when retirement comes he discovers that somewhere along the line the thing he has wanted most has eluded him, for he has never stopped to live well the moment God has given him to enjoy!

Look to this day for it is life,
the very life of life.
In its brief course lie all the varieties and realities of your existence
The bliss of growth, the glory of action, the splendor of beauty
For yesterday is already a dream,
and tomorrow is only a vision;
But today well live, makes every yesterday
A dream of happiness, and every tomorrow a vision of hope.

III

If every life has its purpose and every age its rewards, then every person must have his faith. This is the third bit of wisdom that enables us to grow old gracefully.

The real question that all of us ask in one way or another was asked by a leading philosopher as he stood with friends before the great Sphinx in Egypt. Said a friend: "If you had one question to ask of it, what would it be?" To which he answered: "Is the universe friendly?" If we could answer that one question, then the answers to many other of life's questions would be found. But the answer to that question is found only in terms of faith. I have faith to believe that this universe of ours, of which I am a part, is not a blind mechanism whirling recklessly through space, but a masterful creation of a purposeful God! And as John Fiske of Harvard once said: "Faith — and faith in immortality especially — is the supreme act of confidence in the reasonableness of God's work."

When I was a child I was taught to say that little prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray thee Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray thee Lord my soul to take." I never liked that prayer. I think it was because my fear of death was greater than my faith in God.

I am glad that is no longer true. Today I believe in God. I believe that, as Dr. Fosdick has so wonderfully said, "He is not a God of unfinished business." I can more and more appreciate Charles Kingsley's great words: "God forgive me if I am wrong, but I look forward to death with an intense and reverent curiosity."

THE GLORY OF OLD AGE

M. O. Evans, Jr., First Baptist Church, Lenoir, North Carolina

So teach us to number our days, that we may get us a heart of wisdom. — Psalm 90:12.

Old age is a problem or a glory. To many people it seems to be a problem. The number who live beyond the biblical threescore and ten is on the increase. In 1940, fewer than ten per cent of the population of our country was 65 years of age or older. Because of the great increase in the birth rate, the percentage has not increased; but the num-

ber is much larger now. In 1975, it is estimated that at least 15 per cent of the population will be 65 years or more.

Much study is being given to the situation. Many books have been written on the subject. The increasing number of elderly people is changing the habits of America. It is creating a new area of social and welfare activity.

The Bible teaches us that old age and longevity of life is a gift of God. In Proverbs 9:11, God speaks, "For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased. Again, "The fear of Jehovah prolongeth days" (Prov. 10:27). Someone has spoken of the "golden years." It is a lovely phrase. But for many people, old age does not appear as "golden years"; rather it is a goblin to be avoided, to be postponed at any cost. Individuals dye their hair, refuse to reveal their ages, and use many subterfuges to deceive themselves and others. The middle years become dangerous, because men and women find age creeping upon them and seek to flee from it by demonstrating youthfulness in any way possible.

Many complain about getting old. I hear individuals remark ruefully that they are not as physically active as once they were. Benjamin Disraeli said, "Youth is a blunder; manhood a struggle; old age a regret." Much of the discussion of older people is in terms of "problems." There are many economic, political and social reasons. Perhaps the main reason why older people become problems to their families and communities is that their resources are often limited. I am thinking not so much of the financial as of the spiritual problems.

So many come to old age with no hobbies, few close friends, and few interests except work. When the job is gone, there is nothing to take its place. I think of a man, now 75, who was a successful business man, with scores of friends in his home town. At 65, he decided to sell his business, retire, and move to Florida. He had no hobbies, no avocation; he did not read, garden, fish or hunt. In short, when he quit work, there was nothing he could do except play golf, or cards, and watch television. Gradually, golf became too much effort. Now, he watches television — and nods. Only financially did he prepare for old age.

The person who lives only in the present, in any area of life, will soon be living in the past.

I

Old age is not merely the tattered remnant of life. It may be the most valuable part. It has its place in God's plan for man's usefulness and happiness. There is a purpose in it.

Old age is God's way of helping us to be conscious that the wages of sin is death. A song tells us that "we begin to die from birth." It is true, physically and otherwise. Man is a sinful creature. He has within himself the seed of death. Strive as he will, yet in and of himself, he can do nothing but die. All his cherished schemes and hopes will fade and pass away. He may dream of immortality, but unless help comes from outside himself, all that he does is doomed to dissolution. He may accumulate his treasures and add infinitely to his knowledge. But when life comes to an end, all he has gathered, humanly speaking, is gone. Death is a certainty. Old age reminds us that it draws near.

Old age is also a way God has of reminding us that the material decays and only the spiritual lives. In youth the physical is strong, and the spiritual just beginning. But the man of God grows spiritually as he weakens physically. God would have us know that this life is a time for the building up of the spiritual reserves and treasures. When a man lays up great material resources, he usually finds himself unable to enjoy them

to the fullest, because he is physically on the wane. The material decays, but fortunately, the spiritual lasts and grows. God would bring us to see the decreasing value of the material and the increasing worth of the spiritual. Old age is a poignant reminder that "change and decay in all around I see."

There is glory in old age. These can be the "golden years." Old age is a mark of the blessing of God. It is His gift of time to grow spiritually and to mature. Robert Browning has expressed this beautifully:

Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be;
The last of life for which the
first was made.

It is God's purpose that these latter days of life shall be days of gladness. Someone has written: "Growth is gladdening. He who grows in holiness grows in joy. Spiritual strength brings gladness." The sunset years ought to provide days of peace and serenity, days of satisfaction with accomplishment. Ecclesiasticus writes:

The things that thou hast not
gathered in thy youth,
How shalt thou find them in thy
old age?
O how comely is judgment for a
grey head,
And for ancients to know counsel!
O how comely is wisdom for the
aged,
And understanding, and counsel
to men of honor!
Much experience is the crown of
old men,
And the fear of God is their
glory!

In the minds of so many people, old age is a time of deterioration, lassitude, pettiness, and helplessness. God did not intend it to be so. The Scriptures give us a conception of old age, as a time when honor comes. In Leviticus 19:32, we read, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man." Ecclesiasticus says: "Experience is the crown of old men, and the fear of God is their glory."

II

There are some things, of course, that only the youthful and agile can do. But the greatest privileges and finest ministries are open to the aged.

Old age can make a unique contribution to the beauty and wisdom of life. Much of the greatest in music, art and literature has come from the genius of age. Titian painted his outstanding masterpiece at eighty-five; Sophocles wrote his **Oedipus** at ninety; Benjamin Franklin made his finest contributions to government after he was seventy. Grandma Moses did not discover her talent until she was past the biblical threescore and ten.

Age may sweeten or sour. The loveliest spirits are those who have mellowed through the years. The beauty of the elderly person is not that of mere flesh. It shines through from a beauty which is within. What a poor world this would be without the beauty given to it by God's aged saints.

Old age makes posible also a very practical ministry. It provides opportunities for others to do lovely things. The weakness and helplessness of the aged keeps alive in others the virtue of unselfish service. Patience is required, of course, on the part of those who are served. But this would be a poor world indeed without the opportunities which the aged afford the younger. God was thinking of the young, as well as the old, when he said, "Honor thy father and thy mother." The promise is to the young. Ruth was a lovely young woman, but she owed much to the older Naomi for helping her to become what she was. Timothy could never have become what he was without the help of the older Paul.

Last, but not least, is the ministry of intercession. Moses was at the pinnacle of service when he prayed for

his people there on the hill-top, or when, after the making of the golden calf, Moses interceded for the people, saying, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin, and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."

Samuel never was finer than when in his sunset years, he said to Saul, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

In a church where there had been division, indifference, and inattention to the cause of Christ, there came a revival of attention to spiritual matters. Love and forgiveness took the place of hard feelings. People estranged from the church came back into the fellowship. The secret seemed to be that one little woman, aged and infirm had been praying for a long time, and her prayers were answered.

How wonderful that those who must sit at home can reach the throne of God with their petitions! While the minister preaches, these at home can be supporting him. Only eternity can measure the worth of their intercession.

III

There are many compensations which old age may offer. Judgment, wisdom and understanding are the qualities which God expects of age. These are, to be sure, gifts of God, and not the result of age alone. Yet, as one lives with God and gains the perspective which that companionship affords, his wisdom and understanding are increased.

This wisdom comes from the spirit of Christ. It is not learned in books. Rather, it is acquired through the perspective which God alone can give. In the Orient, old age is regarded as the time of wisdom. The Bible clearly accents this concept. Wise men of all lands have accepted this view. Cicero said, "Intelligence, and reflection, and judgment reside in old men, and if there had been none of them, no states could exist at all."

It is a tragedy that our era has come to feel that a man's usefulness largely declines with age. We should know better. When an empire faces destruction, a Winston Churchill is called to leadership. In our own national politics, older men are those we trust — men like Bernard Baruch and Herbert Hoover. Why then, in the realm of the ministry, or education, or business should the wisdom of years be shunted aside? Must our activism blind us to the values of good judgment?

It is true, of course, that years alone do not produce wisdom. Indeed, their passing may only accentuate the emptiness of little minds and souls. On the other hand, in the man who hungers for them, the years will increase wisdom, sharpen judgment, and broaden understanding. Living with God lifts a man to a plateau from which he can better see the problems and promises of life. He gains true perspective.

"Much experience is the crown of old men." The wise man learns by experience, his own and that of others. Fools never learn. Someone has said humorously, "Learn from the experience of others; you'll never live long enough to make all the mistakes yourself." Old age should be a time rich with experiences.

Through experience one learns the vagaries and eccentricities of others. But one also learns that the great majority of people is good at heart. The veneer of pride and civility hides a host of heartaches, problems and troubles. Humanity is essentially the same everywhere. There is good in everybody, and we are one in our sinfulness.

Through experience we learn to put our trust in God. For we learn that He never lets us down. We can count on Him. He is a guide through the unknown; He is a comforter in time of sorrow and a counselor in time of decision. When we need strength, He

gives it, and the load is never heavier than one can bear.

One can be fairly sure that the greatest psalms of David were written in his latter years. He had learned by experience that God could be trusted in any situation.

Through experience, one learns that God hears and answers prayer. The longer one lives, the closer God seems to be to those who love Him. Prayer comes to be second nature, for God is closer than breathing itself.

Experiences which bring us these riches are not sought and found in a day. One must live many years. Old age thus has many compensations. Its crown is the wisdom and knowledge gained through the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows, the failures, forgiveness and accomplishments of the years.

Experiences enrich us in that they leave their deposit in our lives, often without our being aware. They leave us memories which are treasures. Not all memories, of course, are cherished; hell itself may be created in part by our memories. But many memories may be wonderful, warm and delightful. How pleasant it is to look back across the years and recall friends, events and successes. One can, to be sure, become so prone to reminisce that he forgets the present, but the man who has no memories to relieve is a man who has lived in dreadful poverty of soul.

The third area of compensation is that of faith. Victor Hugo wrote, "Winter is on my head, but eternal spring in my heart; I breathe as this hour the fragrance of the lilacs, the violets, and the roses, as at twenty years ago. The nearer I approach to the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the worlds which invite me." Faith becomes ssurance as we live with God through the years. The psalmist prayer, "So teach us to number our days that we may get us a heart of wisdom." The greatest wisdom is faith in Christ. To love Him, to serve Him, to follow and obey Him, to surrender to Him and to walk with Him — this is man's highest achievement.

There is a glory in old age, not seen or known by youth. Its radiance may be seen in the faces of those saints who have grown in wisdom and knowledge, who have aspired "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

GROW OLD WITH A PURPOSE

Richard L. James, Riverside Avenue Christian Church, Jacksonville, Florida

If you plan with as much care what you are going to do at seventy as you do at thirty, life would be richer. Consider how young persons go to college for four, six or eight years to prepare themselves for work which may last for thirty-five years. On the other hand, many persons come to retirement without giving much thought to it except only to build up financial reserves on which to live. The matter of growing old deliberately and gracefully is something which should be carefully planned.

Old age is like the close of a day. No one can hold a watch and say just at what moment the sky softens from the brilliance of daylight to twilight. But there comes a moment when one realizes that the shadows have deepened. So it is with old age. It is impossible to say at which year it arrives. For some it is earlier than others. It is a process by which things are made mellow, like ripened fruit or light through an old cathedral window. There is a sense in which the first words of a baby can be interpreted, "I'm growing old." The baby tries to walk. The child longs to be a youth and the youth wants to grow up. It is the desire of every living thing to grow. Growth is the des-

iny of all. Since it is the way of all ife, there must be purpose within it. To find that purpose and avoid its dangers is well worth the effort.

There are dangers involved in the growing process. There are signs which are well known as indicating that persons have fallen into the pitfalls of the old. These pitfalls may not be at seventy or ninety; one may find them at forty as well. One of these easily recognized faults of age is the tendency to repeat experiences which have becom familiar to us. A few years ago, it was my assignment to travel with two other speakers as we covered the State of Alabama on an itinerary of three speaking engagements a day. Each of us had the same speech to be delivered at three places a day. At the end of two weeks each knew the others' speech as well as the speaker. There are older persons like that. Give them the cue and you know what the story will be. You could finish it well in advance.

One elderly person told of having worked out a system of signals with other members of the family. They simply held up one finger at the beginning of a story which they had heard before. She confessed that many a story had been changed upon seeing the fingers go up.

Other danger signs for old age are such phrases, "What is this generation coming to?" and "It was not thus back in my time." The golden age is supposed by some to have been in the past. The habit of belittling the accomplishments of the younger generation is one of the dangers. We are told that one of the oldest pieces of writing in existence dates back into the dim centuries of the past and is translated freely, "The younger generation is going to the dogs."

Being critical of others is another of the dangers of old age. Of course, some people seem to have started life this way. They do not improve with age. One of my friends used to complain that a certain friend hardly ever came to see her anymore. One day a group of mutual friends made her give the exact date of the friend's visit. Actually it had been only a few days. Time is relative, however, and for one with nothing to do it passes slowly.

Perhaps the worst habit of age is that of demanding special privileges because of seniority. The autocratic spirit may begin early in life when we demand that children show reverence for their parents and other adults. With this attitude at thirty, one might well suspect what will happen at eighty. One old person, upon being told that he could not do a certain thing replied, "Surely one who has lived a slong as I have should be allowed to do as he pleases." It becomes apparent that no one, regardless of the number of years, can do as he pleases. All of our actions have social implications.

No doubt it's easier to criticize old age than to offer constructive help, but there are two more tendencies of this period of life which need pointing out. At one extreme is the tendency of those who have lost many friends through death to sit with folded hands and wait for the death angel to call them. To them life holds no more interest. Some even pray to be taken out of their troubles. To them the words have little meaning, "I want to be willing to live and ready to die."

At the opposite extreme are the persons who refuse to slow up and take things more leisurely. Such a one is the man at eighty who is still trying to prove that he is as spry as when he was forty. It may have been about such a person that the boy remarked of his grandmother that she was a "going concern."

The blessings of age are more than worth the struggle. Much of the wasted activities carried on by youth have been eliminated by trial and error before age arrives. Age can exercise the highest of mental processes

of reasoning and judgment. The person in this age of life can appreciate the words of the Psalmist:

I shall fear no evil. . . .
I shall not want. . . .
Thou art with me.

Tennyson at eighty-one years wrote "Crossing the Bar." Shirley Jackson Case retired as dean of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago at sixty-five. His work was not finished, for he took over another post, started another journal of religion through which he kept in touch with his contemporaries. The wisdom and experience of men like that are valuable and ought to be increasingly sought out and used by our society.

Old age can be a time of freedom. Consider that in middle life people are worrying about falling hair, decaying teeth, failing eyesight and stiffening joints. By the time old age has arrived they are free from these worries and have made adjustment to baldness, dentures, bi-focals and stiff joints. They have learned to live with these and to take inconveniences in their stride. It is not so much how old you are, but as has been truly said, **how you are old.**

Old age gives the opportunity to deepen faith in the plan of life designed by the Creator. Youth is the planting time; old age is the harvest. In this stage the finer, more delicate things come to fruition. With the wisdom of this insight, churches, civic clubs and other groups band together for the appreciation of old age. The "Four Score and Ten" clubs as well as the "Sixty-Fivers" furnish mutual enjoyment for many whose interests are no longer the frivolous concerns of the younger generation. Browning put the words in the mouth of Rabbi Ben Ezra which summarize all that has been said above:

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in his hand
Who said, "A whole I planned,"
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all,
Be not afraid.

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING (Continued from page 2)

standable the traditional bases of our national religious life. Dr. Cousins' editorial skill and discerning interpretations make the minds of the Fathers revelent to the aspirations of their latter-day sons. (Harper & Brothers, 464 pp., $5.95.)

Three Friendship Press books add significantly to our understanding of present-day Christian endeavors. **Concerns of a Continent,** edited by James W. Hoffman (168 pp., $2.95), examines in depth the problems, progress and possibilities of the church's mission in Alaska, Hawaii, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean area and the States. The various chapters, written by specialists, are candid in analysis and heartening in outlook. The reader is told that this is the hour when a vigorous and redemptive witness will bring new life to "those of our own household." **Middle East Pilgrimage** by R. Park Johnson (164 pp., $2.95) is a timely and authoritative summary of the mind, culture, problems, economy, politics and religion of the Middle East peoples. Few books offer as excellent a background for the comprehension of the far-ranging drama of today's Arabian populations. Especially valuable are the final chapters which present the contrasts between Christianity and Islam and the ways by which the Christian evangelical gospel may be propagated. **The Lands Between** by John S. Badeau, one-time president of the American University at Cairo, adds further understanding concerning the Middle East. The story of these people since the time of Abraham is deft-

y sketched in this chronicle of history, geography, religion and politics. Writing as a keen and sympathetic observer, the author offers guidance to misinformed Westerners and a sober reflection on the inadequacies of Christian nations and nationals to recognize the Middle Easterners as people.

Jeremiah, Prophet of Courage and Hope, by J. Philip Hyatt is one of the finest brief studies of a major prophet which is available. Scholarly competence and clarity of expression offer new light for an adequate appreciation of the prophet's life and times, personality and thought. The book may become the basis for preaching and study class series. (Abingdon Press, 128 pp., $2.)

Christian Education of Adults by Earl F. Zeigler should be read by all church leaders who are concerned or engaged in adult work. The author defines adulthood, its needs and interests; adult Christian education, its programing, content and goals; and the areas wherein response can be most readily expected. (Westminster Press, 142 pp., $2.75.)

One Way of Living by George M. Docherty is a further evidence of the pulpit mastery of Scottish preachers. The author eight years ago succeeded Peter Marshall as pastor of Washington's New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. It is perhaps unfair to compare men of as diverse talents as Marshall and Docherty, yet the reading of this book makes apparent that each mirrors the evangelical fervor, the penetrating and inspiring Christian conviction, and the literary skill of the traditional Scottish pulpit. The present book is actually a revision of sermons, now recast for the readers of books. Beginning with the author's conversion — the author's defense of the faith he proclaims — the book points to areas where conversion is tested and matured, and concludes with the sermon, "This Nation under God," which initiated the decision to add "under God" to the pledge of allegiance. (Harper & Brothers, 173 pp., $3.)

Faith for These Troubled Times by Denson N. Franklin contains twelve sermons that display a creative, imaginative and vigorous homiletic style. The author, who is pastor of the Gadsden (Alabama) First Methodist Church, has a natural capacity for vivid phrasing, integration of illustration and theme, and cumulative sermon structure. (Fleming H. Revell, 123 pp., $2.)

Pathways to Understanding is described by the author, Harold E. Kohn, Michigan Congregational pastor, as "outdoor adventures in meditation." Forty-five meditations and an equal number of brush and ink drawings by the author center in a wide variety of spiritual lessons and suggestions from the world of nature. The author combines the sharp and sympathetic eye of a naturalist, the expression of an experienced writer, and the witness of a Christian in these unusual meditations which will appeal equally to children and adults, to pastors and teachers. (Eerdmans Publishing Co., 196 pp., $3.)

EDWARD W. STIMSON
THEODORE P. FERRIS
GENE W. BRICE
WESLEY P. FORD

Old Testament Personalities

THE AUTOMATIC CALF

Edward W. Stimson, Dundee Presbyterian Church, Omaha, Nebraska

> So they gave it to me; then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.—Exodus 32:24.

The story of Aaron's automatic calf mocks every abdication of moral responsibility. It came as the half-comic anticlimax of one of the greatest events in human moral history.

Moses had led the people of Israel out of their slavery in Egypt and to freedom. But to use real freedom they had to have moral stability. So he led them to Mt. Sinai, there to receive the basic moral training of the law of God which they must accept and obey if they would truly become a free people.

The religion of Sinai was the religion of God's word spoken to Moses, the prophet of the Lord the religion of high and lofty righteousness which demands responsible obedience. The awesomeness of the whole scene was most impressive. Israel was encamped in the wilderness before the great mountain. There were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a loud blast like the sound of a trumpet startled the people so that everyone trembled. From the foot of the mountain all watched as Moses ascended up where the smoke enveloped the mountain top, where the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the whole montain quaked violently. And as the sound like a trumpet grew louder and louder, God spoke to Moses in thunder. And Moses came down to the expectant people and said, "Thus says the Lord. 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I brought you here to myself on eagles' wings. Now if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant you shall be my own possession among the peoples, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." And he gave them the Law of the Covenant including the Ten Commandments, of which the first two were: "You shall have no other Gods before me" and " You shall not make yourself a graven image, or any likeness of any thing."

And all the people answered and said, "All the words which the Lord has spoken will we do."

So Moses built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and made animal sacrifices, and threw half of the blood against the altar, and sprinkled the other half upon the people, and, having read the Covenant agrement, said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

Then the Lord called Moses to come back up the mountain to receive the tables of stone on which the law would be permanently inscribed. He told them to wait for him as he and his servant Joshua ascended the mountain. As they waited all they could se was the fire and cloud on top of the mountain for forty days.

Then the people grew restless, and said to Aaron the priest, Moses' brother, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us, for Moses is gone.' Then Aaron had them contribute their gold earrings, made a kiln and cast a molten calf, and fashioned it with a graving tool. Then he set up an altar, made a sacrifice and the people sat down to eat and drink and rose

dance and play according to ancient licentious pagan rites.

In the midst of this pagan festivity, Moses came down the mountain, with the two tables of stone inscribed with the covenant law in his hands. He and Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted and sang. And when Moses saw the calf and the dancing, he flushed with hot anger. In high dudgeon he threw down the precious stones, broke them upon the rocks at the foot of the mountain, melted the calf, burnt it with fire, ground it to powder, scattered it upon the drinking water and made the people drink it as a trial by ordeal, an ordeal which some did not endure.

Then he turned to Aaron. First Aaron blamed the people for asking him to do it. Then he made his lucrous confession, "And I said to them 'Let any who have gold take it off,' so they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and there came out this calf." As though he had done nothing to fashion it! As though somehow fate, or Providence, or natural events made that calf inevitable. Somehow he had hardly anything to do with it, certainly no blame in the matter. There in the fire it happened the automatic calf!

I

We smile because we understand Aaron so well. His reaction is so typical. Granted that on the surface what he said was a bald-faced lie, a pitiful falsehood in the attempt to escape his moral responsibility. But do not be too summary with Aaron. The way he felt at the moment, putting all the emphasis in his self-excusing thought upon the extenuating circumstances it seemed to Aaron that this was essentially what happened. After all, Aaron was a priest, and therefore very close to the feelings of his people — closer than Moses who was closer to God, and used Aaron to speak to the people. He was peculiarly subject to the social pressure of the people's desires, sensitive to their wishes and would want to satisfy their wishes in the matter of worship. And certainly these people, used to living amid the idols of Egypt and travelling toward Caanan where the Canaanites worshipped the Baalim whose images were in the form of bull calves, wanted a golden calf.

Besides, when Aaron started to make that calf it came out so naturally to his hand that it almost seemed to make itself. He didn't have to stop to think about it. Why the image of a calf should be so much in subconscious mind Aaron did not stop to analyze. We can conjecture. The few cattle they had brought with them from Egypt were not being eaten those days. They would need them to start herds in the promised land. The manna on which they fed was a poor substitute for choice roasts and beefsteak. Omaha people ought to understand this desire. Then to nomadic herdsmen cattle were the most coveted form of wealth. They dreamed of calves with the avidity some people today dream of inheriting a million dollars or answering the $64,000 question! And besides the bull-calf was the ancient symbol of fertility, and the rites of Baal worship were a licentious orgy, the very thing Moses interrupted at the foot of the mountain. Aaron was human, very human, and like people, like priest, his desires toward all that calf represented gave wings to his artistic prowess, and that calf just came out of the fire almost inevitably. Does that sound plausible to you? If it doesn't you haven't read much modern psychology.

II

Shakespeare understood it. He saw how it can even excuse our sinful purposes before the deed. Even in temptation we can practice such self-deceit, for we must always think well of ourselves. You remember how Macbeth, when the guilty ambition —

which was ultimately going to ruin him — first arose in his mind, excused his desire to get the kingship even to himself. Macbeth pretended that he thought he was willing to accept the kingdom only if it came to him out of the working of things without any responsible moves on his part. He says: "If chance will have me King, why chance may crown me, without my stir."

That was the first stage of the growing crime that finally became murder. How many modern criminals succumb to a feeling of inevitability about their criminality. They have it all rationalized. It is not their fault. They haven't a chance. They were never given a break. They had the wrong kind of parents, grew up in the wrong neighborhood, were misunderstood in school, aren't trained to earn a decent living to buy what they feel they must have, society is against them — put all that into the fire and there comes out this calf, an incorrigible criminal. Sometimes the defense attorney, if he has the Clarence Darrow technique, can convince a jury that it is this way or even that a signed confession with 18 corrections in the murderer's own hand-writing might be the automatic reactions of a man under an hypnotic spell. As though hypnotism could force a man so to confess against his will and act rationally against his own conscience! We are in grave danger of succumbing in our jurisprudence and psychological social work to the fallacy and illusion of the automatic calf. We have been deluged with the theory that social conditions are the main, if not the complete determining factors in the shaping of personality, that people will all be good if you put them in decent neighborhoods with plenty of play space and bathrooms — only to discover that juvenile delinquency is no respecter of neighborhoods. Certainly poor environment is a factor, but let no person excuse himself by pleading it! Surely faulty parents have responsibility, but let no individual blame his parents for what he does now for now he is a free agent and must accept responsibility for his present actions. If our parents gave us a poor start that is the more reason that we should try harder and admit that we may be wrong and be humble about it. We have heard the law. As members of the moral order we have accepted the covenant. Whatever the fleshpots of Egypt in our background, we don't have to throw in our earrings and there are no automatic calves unless we are psychotics beyond all rational appeal who should be forthwith locked up.

Yet rationalized irresponsibility is not all criminal. There is the man who makes business his god, who cares for nought else. "What do you expect?" he asks. "This is a business world. I am what the necessities of competition in this world has made me. I put my life in there and it came out this." And he fondly gazes at his golden calf, and his knees bend under him in the long habit of worshipping it.

So of the woman who makes society her idol, whose moral attitudes are all shaped by what is done and who subordinates everything else — home, church, children, God, to the competitive social whirl. "But I can't help being a daughter of the times," she says. "I put my life in the best circles, and there came out this!" Before God no higher responsibility.

One of the interesting types is the man who has no use for the church because he was made to go to Church and Sunday School when he was a boy and is still the confessed pawn of his adolescent faith, unable to be impressed with his mature responsibility to share in what only the Church can do for this ailing world because he insists he is an automatic calf!

Then, of course, there are the many who rationalize various moral failures this way: isn't the temptation

adily present, and the lust claim-
t, and must not nature be obeyed
isn't it just instinctive to worship
e calf of fertility above God who
akes such impossible requirements
those implied by the Seventh
ommandment?

III

And most common of all, how mod-
n men and women disclaim all re-
onsibility of a moral sort for the
orship of Bacchus. That too was
the ancient rites of Baal worship.
ey drank before they danced
ound the calf! And in our time it
s become almost taboo to consider
cohol an issue for accepting moral
sponsibility. If you are an alco-
lic you are sick and totally irre-
onsible; therefore, not to be blamed.
t to be blamed for taking that
st drink when you know that means
mplete loss of moral control? Not
be blamed for refusing to admit
e's life is unmanageable in the face
all the evidences to substantiate
and intsisting that one does not
ed the help of God? That is still
in my book, even though I rec-
nize that after the first drink such
ople are often helpless!

But what about the people who are
t yet alcoholics? Is there no moral
sponsibility for their yielding to so-
l pressures when they know bet-
r. Must the conventions of a so-
ty that is sick with millions of
oblem drinkers and the pressures
certain business customs and the
btle coercions of the advertise-
nts on which the liquor industry
ends untold millions be allowed to
rnish the excuse: "Well, of course,
erybody wants it and expects it,
d I just conform. One can't be
fferent you know, and I never in-
nd to take too much, and of course
I don't want my children to drink.
How could my daughter ever have
gotten into this trouble? I didn't will
it this way. There came out this
calf!"

IV

When will we admit that we are
free moral agents with every oppor-
tunity for responsible choices under
God's adequate tutelage? When shall
we learn to admit it when we are
wrong?

A switchboard operator said to the
superintendent of a hospital, "I never
say I'm wrong."

"Oh," said the Superintendent, "I
say it a dozen times a day." The re-
sult was she was the superintendent
of the hospital while the other was
caught at the switchboard level!

There is an answer to all this. It
is a better answer than Sinai afforded.
Moses smashed the Tables of the Law
in anger and disgust, for he had the
first experience of the inadequacy
of just knowing what is right and
promising to do right where moral
responsibility is concerned. No, Cal-
vary had to supersede Sinai, not that
Sinai was never repudiated. The Ta-
bles were recarved and treasured for
ages, but it was only when the for-
giving love of the Cross engraved
those laws and the law of love upon
human hearts, that men became not
only willing but able to accept their
freedom and gladly obey of their own
free will. For when we accept Christ's
forgiveness, that can only be if we
acknowledge that we were at fault,
and were humble about it. Christ's
sacrifice for us is aimed at our re-
sponsible freedom, honestly to con-
fess our faults and accept His spirit.
For where the Spirit of the Lord is,
there is liberty!

HE MAN WHO SOLD HIS SOUL

Theodore P. Ferris, Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts

This is about a man who sold his
ul. In more ways than one it is an
old story. It is the story of something
that happened almost three thousand

years ago, and it is the story of something that has been repeated over and over again in human lives for generations and is being written now in the lives of some of us.

This particular story is a true story. It is an episode in the life of a real man who lived a real life; not fiction, but fact. It is not a pretty story or a pleasant one. It's the kind of story that you would'nt read before you went to sleep at night, but it is one of those stories that makes you think. It reveals something not only about the man who is the leading figure in the story, but also something about human nature, your nature; and what is more, about the nature of God and the universe we live in. It makes you think; it makes you ask yourself questions, questions like these. How much are you willing to pay to get the preferment you want in business? How far are you willing to go to get the popular rating you want? How many corners are you willing to cut to get the things you want in your personal life? And how long do you think you can evade the inescapable judgment of God?

I

Now this is a story about a man who wanted a vegetable garden. It doesn't sound like a very auspicious beginning, does it? The situation was an unusual one because the man in this case happened to be a king. His name was Ahab and he was King of Israel, not a great nation in size or population or political power, the northern kingdom, with Judah its more substantial partner directly to the south. But nevertheless, he sat on his throne and ruled it with a considerable degree of efficiency, and he remained its king for twenty-two years.

Presumably, as a king he had just about everything he wanted by way of power and prestige and a fine place to live, but like many of us who have all the necessities of life and many of the luxuries, everything that anybody would think our hearts could want, and yet have a passionate desire for some relatively unimportant thing, he wanted something else. He wanted a vegetable garden and he didn't have any room for it on the palace grounds. But near the palace, so near that he could see it, there was a vineyard, rich, fertile, easily accessible, and as his eye fell on that vineyard his heart was set upon it. The only difficulty was that it belonged to somebody else. It belonged to a man named Naboth, not an important man, just a little man in the kingdom, but a citizen, nevertheless, and the king realized the meaning of a man's right to hold property — one of the most widely recognized rights of man. So he went to Naboth and told him that he would like his vineyard for his vegetable garden and offered to give him another vineyard in exchange for it or, if that didn't suit him, to give him whatever it was worth in money. Nothing could be fairer than that. And Naboth stood before the king, this little man, entirely unknown to the king and said, "No! You can have my vineyard for any amount of money, or in exchange for any other vineyard because this vineyard has been in my family for years, and no other vineyard could possibly take the place of it." It makes you rather proud of human nature to think of Naboth, with all the dangers involved, having the courage to stand up to the king for his rights.

There are things in life that money cannot buy and, unfortunately Ahab who had been able to buy so many things, almost anything he ever wanted, had probably forgotten that. There are values over and above the stock market price; the things that really make something worth everything to you are very often not the things that you could put on paper.

So Ahab, rather stunned, I imagine because kings are not often accustomed to be refused, especially

those days when they had more power than they have today, went home and refused to eat anything or to say a word to anyone, including his wife. In fact, he turned his face to the wall as he lay on his couch. In other words he was sullen, and sulked. I can't resist noting the fact which I am sure you have observed many times (I'm not quite sure why it is important to note it except that I may warn you of what might happen in your own life) that in the life of a big man there are likely to be some mighty small corners, and very often the bigger the man the smaller the corner. Picture a king who could have anything he wanted sulking because he couldn't have another man's vineyard. The childish tantrums of a genius like Toscanini. The easily offended feelings of a giant like Woodrow Wilson. These little corners in our lives, which we would be ashamed to have anybody else see, are there, and the greater the person is the more likely there is some little corner like that which he would almost rather die than have exposed.

II

Now what had happened to Ahab happens all the time and to many of us on a much smaller and less spectacular scale. What had happened was this: a reasonable desire had grown quite naturally and almost without his awareness into an unreasonable demand. And mark this, the demand was unreasonable not because it was a violation of property rights but because it was a violation of personal rights. He had taken care of Naboth's property rights in his offer, but he had completely overlooked Naboth's rights as a person who had feelings and loyalties, and relationships. It was his desire to use another person to satisfy his own needs. I want a garden; you have the land; I'll buy it, and the fact that the land means a lot to you means nothing whatsoever to me.

A man says, I want to be happy; there is a woman who can make me happy; she already belongs to someone else; he can find another; what's that to me? Or, a man who says, I want to make money; a perfectly natural, reasonable desire; there is a competitor in my way; I can't make my way unless I get him out of the way; therefore, I shall get him out of my way and he can start another business of his own. What's that to me? That's his lookout. Do you ever want things and want them desperately, and then find yourself in a position of pursuing a means to get what you want knowing that the means is wrong, evil, so that your first innocent, natural and reasonable desire has grown into an unreasonable demand?

And Ahab, you see, like so many of us, was so consumed by his own desires that he was entirely blind to the needs and rights of Naboth. I don't imagine he had any conception at all of what was going on in Naboth's mind. He had only one thing on his mind and that was what he wanted; all other considerations were excluded. I need not give any specific illustrations of this because you know them better than I do. You know that you can become so preoccupied and obsessed by the things which you want that you can be completely blind and insensitive to the feelings of other people upon whom you are unwittingly trampling to get the things you want. A man who wants a certain job can become completely blind to the fact that there are others who for good reasons also want it.

III

Ahab, however, being a man with a conscience and a sense of fairness, was willing to accept the situation; he went home and, as we have said, lay down on his couch, refused to eat, or to talk, and let his desire burn itself out without every being translated into a deed. In other words, at this time he did **not** sell his soul for the garden.

But Ahab had an unscrupulous accomplice. It was his wife, Jezebel, and she began with the most tender spot that a man can be touched, namely, his pride. When she saw him in a state of depression she said, "What is the matter with you? Why are you so depressed?" Then he told her, and she said, "Aren't you the King of Israel?" And what she implied was that if he was the King of Israel he ought to have the courage to have or to get the things he wanted. However, knowing her husband and knowing that perhaps he wouldn't do anything more about it, she proceeded to set up a plan by which she could get the vineyard for Ahab. It was a very simple plan. She proposed to get the vineyard by getting rid of Naboth and she did that by writing letters to the city fathers of the town in which Naboth lived, Jezreel, and directing them to proclaim a big holiday, a fast, setting Naboth in a very prominent place, and setting or "planting" two men who would, in vulgar language, "frame" him and claim that he was guilty both of blasphemy and treason. She signed the letters with her husbands' name and sealed them with his seal and sent them off. He let her do it, and the fast was proclaimed, and the men were put in the audience, and they made the judgment against Naboth, and he was taken out and stoned. So Ahab got his garden. He sold his soul for a garden. How great a price for so little! What exorbitant prices men have foolishly paid for things which after all are little more than trinkets. You almost cringe because you know that it has happened over and over again. You think of Judas — thirty pieces of silver for the Son of Man. You think of other people down through the corridor of history and you think, I hope, a little of yourself. How many times you have done a mean, miserable thing to get so little. Your own character and personality, your own integrity, is a lot to give for a vineyard.

You see, what Ahab didn't have the courage to do for himself, Jezebel did for him. And the truth is (and this makes our situation even more difficult, but we ought to recognize it) that you can always find available accomplices in life. You never need be alone in evil; there are all sorts of forces and factors, personal and impersonal, which will come to your aid if begin to withdraw, or doubt your ability, or be afraid. They fortify and reassure you, sometimes even do it for you. It may be a friend who will whisper in your ear, "Yes, that's all right; go ahead and do it; it's all right." Or, it may be public opinion that will say, "Certainly, certainly that's the way people behave these days; go ahead."

I often wonder what goes on in the minds of the people who run some of the programs that are shown in the later hours of the evening on television. I have seen a few of them and I look at then now for one thing, to see if I can find a moving picture after ten-thirty which is not about crime and violence. Any child who has access to television can have free of charge a perfect post-graduate education in every kind of crime known to man. We are very careful to protect our children from what we choose to think are the evils of sex and the flesh, but to the evils of violence and crime we liberally expose them. I am sure that some of the people responsible are aware of it. Then, you see, the accomplices come to their aid. "This is what the public wants. This is what will pay for the rest of television." And so, what they might not have the wits or courage to do for themselves, their accomplices do for them, or encourage them to do.

IV

We might be interested to ask this question. Why did Jezebel do what she did? Was it because she was a foreigner? She didn't belong to Israel. Her father was the King of Tyre. She was brought up in an entirely

fferent moral atmosphere with dif-
rent standards of living and that
ght be a reason why she was will-
g to do what she did. Was it be-
use she was an evil person through
d through? She could live on lies as
turally as most of us can live on
ead. Oh, was it because she loved
m? I don't know. But it is worth
king because it makes our human
uation much more subtle and com-
icated than it otherwise would be,
is strange mixture of evil. Was it
cause the wife was ambitious for
r husband, and loved him, and
nted him to have what he wanted
at she was willing to do this de-
icable thing? How many times do
u think a parent has aided and
etted a child in doing something
nich he knew was not right simply
cause he loved the child so much?
istakenly, to be sure, he wanted
m to have what he wanted. I often
nder how many times a husband
a wife aids and abets the other one
the team in doing something that
not quite on the level because he
es her or she loves him so much
at she can't bear to see him de-
ived of anything. In my life, of
urse, it comes in a different way. A
an can love his church so much
at sometimes he can stoop to all
nds of unworthy propaganda, pub-
ity, and promotion, and appeals to
e feelings of the people so that he
mpletely prostitutes the church
self.

Whatever the reason was, that evil
ed was done. Naboth, the simple,
nest peasant, was killed, and the
neyard belonged to Ahab. We live
a world like that, of injustices and
fairness. Why? I can't answer that
estion, and this is not the time to
y. This is the world we live in, but
is is not the end of the story. When
hab got up to go down to look at
is new garden, he met a strange, al-
ost weird-looking man on the way,
d when he saw him, he stopped
dead in his tracks, and was afraid, and said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" And he said, "I have found thee: for thou hast sold thyself to evil in the sight of the Lord." It was Elijah, the man of God. Weird, wild in some ways, according to our standards of thinking, fighting a battle against those who worshipped nature rather than the God of nature. This was not the first time he and Ahab had met each other. Here was the voice of Ahab's conscience. The voice of the eternal God. And Ahab fortunately had the grace to recognize that it was his enemy. Ahab had a reasonable desire that grew into an unreasonable demand; he had an unscrupulous accomplice and he had an inescapable enemy.

Life catches up with us sooner or later. You never can tell when. Sometimes it is postponed a generation or more. Jesus caught up with Peter very quickly and looked at him with a look that melted Peter's heart and made him weep. God doesn't always catch up with us as quickly as that, but you can be sure of this, and I will put it in non-religious language for those of you who perhaps have not yet learned to think in those terms, that the laws of the moral universe snap back when they have been bent too far and the person in the way of them is almost sure to be hurt.

But this comes as an item of good news at the end of this grim story. Much as it may make us suffer, and hard as it may be for us to bear the consequences of our follies and our foolishness, nevertheless, it gives us courage and strength to know that we live in a universe where goodness is not mocked and where justice is not passed by. Ahab had a scrap of conscience left, enough to respond to what the man of God said; and God would not let that conscience rest. It was the man's salvation.

ON RUNNING FROM NINEVAH

Gene W. Brice, First Christian Church, Alpine, Texas

In the book of Jonah there are three outstanding characters — God, Jonah and the whale. Most of us seem to consider the whale to be the real hero of the story. It is a strange fact, but true, that so often men are remembered not by the general overtones of their life, but by some minor event that clings to the public imagination, and from then on, characterizes that person.

Jonah preached in Ninevah, but most of us never think of that, because Jonah was also swallowed by a big fish; and that's a much more interesting thought.

Daniel was a very important leader in his government, but most of us never think of that because Daniel was also thrown into the lion's den, and that's a much more interesting thought.

Sir Isaac Newton was one of England's great philosophers and scientists, but most of us think of Sir Isaac merely as the man who, while sleeping under a tree, had an apple fall and hit him on the head, and promptly defined gravity's law.

A fellow named Corrigan was one of the University of Alabama's greatest football players, but in a certain Rose Bowl game he recovered a fumble in midair and inadvertently ran 70 yards the wrong way; and he is in the sporting world remembered more for that wrong-way-run than his many touchdowns for Alabama.

As a matter of face, the story of Jonah is the story of a man who ran the wrong way. He ran the wrong way because that seemed the best way to solve a problem. What was the problem? And how did he intend to solve it?

The problem, put very simply, was that God asked Jonah to do something he didn't want to do. God said to Jonah, "Get up and go to Ninevah, that great city, and preach against it; for their wickedness has come to my attention." Jonah didn't want to go. So what to do about it?

If the little boy at home has his main job emptying the trash, and he sees that the waste basket is so full that his mother is about to ask him to empty it, he generally solves his problem by putting as wide a gap as possible between himself and his mother. Jonah did this. He decided to run from God to Tarshish, far away from Ninevah. Catching a boat at Joppa, he headed south, only to discover the terror of an ocean storm. When lots were cast to determine a whom the gods were angry, the lot fell on Jonah. He confessed his disobedience of God, was thrown overboard, gulped down by a great fish and deposited for three days in the fish's belly. After repenting, which must have been easier because of his uncertain future, Jonah was cast up on shore, and headed for Nineva where he grudgingly carried through his task.

So ends the story of a man with a problem. The lesson in it for us, as we try to solve our problems, is that there are right and wrong ways to attempt to solve our perplexing situations.

I

All of us share with Jonah at least one characteristic — we have a problem. Should I copy my friend's book report for school? Should I pass along this juicy bit of information I heard about John Doe? What can I do about my habit of talking too much? Do I give enough to my church? Any of these might be your problem. What do we do about our problem? May I remind you of some of the things we actually do about problems.

Some of us ignore our problems. We just don't admit that they exist. We train ourselves not to look honestly into ourselves. As large as the

eam in our own eye may be, we on't see it. In Texas is a town which asts that it has no racial problem. ow? Only white people are al-wed to live, or stop overnight, with-its borders.

Jesus saw that some of his oppo-nts were ignoring their own prob-ms. These were the scribes and harisees. They could only see the roblem that Jesus posed to them, a hreat to their established religion. hey could see none of their own elf-righteousness and hypocrisy. So esus, in some of his most scathing emarks, let these people know that ney were ignoring their own prob-ms. "You white-washed tombs," he aid, "outwardly you are clean look-ng, but inwardly you are rotten and ead. You are hypocrites. You clean he outside of the cup, but not the nside. Look inside yourselves — hat's where real impurity, and real roblems exist."

You cannot solve a problem by ig-oring it. A man who ignores the act that his front yard needs mow-ng, not only finds that it still needs nowing a week later, but that the ask becomes much harder. Some-ne tells of the old river-boat cap-in who was bragging to a passen-er. "Yes," he said proudly, "I real-y know this river like the palm of ny hand. There isn't a sandbar in it hat I'm not familiar with." Just then he boat ran aground with a sicken-ng lurch. "See," the captain said, here's one of them now."

Unfortunately, the boat was still ground, and would be until the cap-in acknowledged his problem.

Or if we don't ignore our prob-ems, we put them off into the fu-ure. Perhaps Jonah said to himself s he sailed for Tarshish, "Someday 'll return and do something about Ninevah, but now on to Tarshish." But put-off problems have a way of never resting easy and never being olved. The world is full of people whose eternal vow is: "Some day I'm going to do something about that. Some day I'm going to turn over a new leaf, and you won't see the doors of this church open without me being here. I know I ought to pray, and one of these days I'm going to start in regularly."

The tragedy, of course, is that "some day" is as impossible to approach as "tomorrow." And Ninevah still remains in the distance, and the problem still needs solving.

Or we run from our problems, as Jonah did. Here is a perplexing problem hammering at our consciousness, depriving us of sleep, or peace of mind; so we run away from that problem.

The little boy who doesn't want to empty the waste basket runs away from his problem, but most of us run in more subtle ways. Psychologists tell us that alcoholism is largely stimulated by an unwillingness to face problems. The man of the house faces the alternatives of going home to the wife and kids, the wife nagging, the kids yelling, to be questioned about the mortgage, the payments on the refrigerator, the knock in the car motor, or buying a beverage that insures that for a few hours, at least, he won't be bothered with all those problems. So he chooses the easy alternative once, and twice, and then habitually. He purchases moments of troubled unawareness, but when soberness returns to him, the mortgage, the payments, and the knock in the car are still there, demanding his attention.

This is what Jonah discovered. He could run to Tarshish, or wherever, but his problem would run as fast as he. The boy running from emptying the trash must come home, sooner or later, and the wastebasket is still waiting for him. Jonah could go a thousand miles beyond Tarshish, but Ninevah would still be there; and Jonah would never know a moment of peace until he did something about Ninevah. Someone has written, "They change their stars but not themselves,

who sail the seven seas." Jonah could sail a million miles, and in his own heart Ninevah would still be crying out for God's word.

II

Just as foolish a method of solving a problem — but at the other extreme from running way — is blindly attacking it, ducking your head and without thinking at all, plowing right into the problem and its solution. Such actions often create quite a stir, but seldom solve the problem.

Perhaps all of us have shared the experience of getting up at night to turn the light on, and while walking toward the light switch of striking our toe solidly against a chair. Some people react by giving the chair a swift kick. Of course, the problem is thereby only aggravated, perhaps by a broken toe.

Simon once kicked a chair with his bare foot. His Master was being arrested by a legion of Roman soldiers, and Simon didn't like it. So he drew his sword and before anyone realized what was happening had cut off the ear of a Roman servant. Jesus said: "Simon, if you live by the sword, you're going to die by the sword. Now put that thing up." Jesus realized that they could have been knee-deep in cut-off Roman ears, and still the basic problem would remain — a world that was recluctant to receive him. Blindly attacking a problem does not solve it.

III

What then does solve problems? Perhaps these general rules will help. First of all, face the fact that you have a problem. A problem cannot be solved until it is recognized as a problem. Then, do not feel sorry for yourself. Some folks act as though they had been picked out to suffer. All people have problems, and our problem is not unique. Then, think of all the possible solutions for your problem. Write them down, if you want to, all the possibilities. Evaluate the possibilities. How do they accord with Christ's teachings? Pray about the soluiton. Ask God's guidance in arriving at the proper answer to the problem. From the alternatives choose one course of action. Then, start doing it.

Jonah could have been contented forever had there not been a Nineveh which demanded his consideration and plagued his conscience. But there was a Nineveh, and until Jonah did something about it, his life would never be what it was meant to be.

There are Ninevehs in the lives of ever person. There are problems that demand our attention. There are situations that will never point us to have real inner peace until we attend to them. Maybe yours is a habit you want to get rid of. Maybe it is a choice you've had before you for a long time. Perhaps we'd all better look at our lives and pay special attention to our problems. Are there Ninevehs in our lives we are running from? Pray to God that it will not take a big fish to jolt us into awareness.

PUT OFF PRISON GARMENTS

Wesley P. Ford, Central Christian Church, Pasadena, California

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. He was ruthless in the invasion. The shadows of this mighty empire had been for years hanging over Jerusalem. For eleven years Jehoiakim was the king of Judah and in compromise became a partial ally of the Babylonians. Upon his death, Jehoiakim was succeeded by Jehoiachin.

Jehoiachin was only eighteen when he became king. His youth was an inspiration, and hope returned among the people. But when the young king had reigned for only three months the Babylonians marched to invade

estroy, and imprison. Jehioachin was mong those taken to Babylon where was put in prison. Most of the con- ered Jews were given freedom to tablish their own community in the range land, but not so the king. He as imprisoned.

For nearly forty years nothing more known of Jehioachin. But time ran t for the ruthless Nebuchadnezzar. ter thirty-seven years of exile the ng of Babylon died. Kings can con- er, they can win great power and estige, but no matter the splendor their plummage they cannot win e battle of time. Even kings must e.

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by vilmarodach, who had some differ- t opinions. Acquainted with recent ents, he came to his task with some ans in mind. In the year that he gan to reign he released Jehoiachin m prison.

We do not know the reasons for e generosity of the new king. May- the prisoner had made an impres- n by his character or by the ac- ptance of his plight. But whatever, vilmarodach set him free and spoke ndly to him and gave him a seat ove the seats of other kings who ere in Babylon. The presence of her kings indicates that the con- erors had destroyed other small tions.

I

One phrase stands out. After thir- -seven years the new king released hoiachin and "spoke kindly to him." hat a glorious virtue kindness is! hat a thrill to encounter it! What joy it must have been to a prisoner ter thirty-seven years to meet some- e who would just be kind.

Those of us who are free would do ell to remember two facts: first, me who are now in prison may not ave been there had they encountered ough kindness in their earlier lives; d second, all those who need kind- ss are not in prison. These are in r schools, they are fellow em- ployees, they are our neighbors. They are in the same church with us. When wondering what to do for another, have you considered just plain kindness? "And he spoke kindly to him." Against the background of prison the phrase stands out in bold relief. From then on, Jehoiachin dined at the king's table. Kindness led to a lasting friendship between captor and captured.

In spite of the privileges won and the kindness shown him, Jehoiachin was not permitted to return to Jerusalem. He and his people were still in the exile which Jeremiah had said would be long. But in this foreign land he now accepted a new role. And, after thirty-seven years, the record says, "He put off his prison garments." Here again an idea leaps out and dances before us. Happiness can be found if one learns to take off prison garments.

II

We have a tendency to build prisons for ourselves. One method is by memory. What a joy to be able to remember, especially when one has planted flowers. But what misery to be unable or unwilling to forget. Ours is to learn from the past but not to be enslaved by it.

My cheek with tears is always wet,
I have forgotten to forget.

Memory is meant to be our ally but only as we bring it to the discipline of choice. Memory, without the willingness to forget, becomes like a prison wall. "Forgetting what lies behind," wrote Paul, "I press on." Paul had an unfortunate past but he had entered a new day and was big enough to leave the old. "Let those of us who are mature," he wrote, "be thus minded." Maturity puts off prison garments.

Some build a prison, in which they suffer persecution, by clinging to a sense of guilt. A feeling of guilt ought to be disturbingly painful until one

repents and seeks forgiveness. But by the Christian faith, when forgiveness is sought and found it must be accepted. "Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors." And let's not forget that we are among our debtors and so are called to forgive ourselves as God forgives us.

With the exception of Jesus Christ we have yet to find in all the history of mankind a perfect person. This fact helps me gain freedom from past errors. That individual who will not allow himself a margin of error is in for a hard time. Unless he is different from every other person on earth he will make some mistakes of action or judgment. Through mercy and forgiveness God has covered that margin for us. But God cannot help if we will not accept. Take off prison garments.

Some build a prison of envy. Seeing another's good fortune we conclude, "He gets all the breaks. What if I had the chance he has." The tenth commandment says, "Thou shalt not covet." Thou shalt not want the other person's role. This old decalogue includes not only a ban on overt acts such as killing and stealing, it limits also the wrong thought processes. Covetousness is only an attitude, but it is an attitude that imprisons. "I bind myself to peace — to make strife and envy cease." Strife is the action — envy is the thought process. They both enslave. Take off the prison garments of envy and jealousy and set yourself free!

III

The twelfth chapter of acts contains the account of Paul's imprisonment by Herod. During a night in pri son something happened that Pau did not wholly understand. He only knew that the Lord had spoken and acted. An angel appeared, a ligh showed, and as Paul got up quickly the chains fell of his hands. With the angel he walked past the first and second guard and came to the gate "It opened to them of its own accord." And Paul walked out a free man.

I do not know all the factors tha made the prison gate open of its own accord, but this I know: God seek to open every prison gate in man' path. He has given us memory, bu He also says, "Forget the past, take today." A God-given conscience pricks and stings when we are guilty, but God has poured out life and love to bring us forgiveness. The gate of forgiveness opens of its own accord, begging us to pass through Little ideas — envy and jealousy - reach down to imprison us. But in their stead God would have us take the big ideas revealed by Jesus Christ — goodwill, respect and honor and love, and kindness. Take these and the chains will fall off, and the gate will open.

After thirty-seven years there was kindness and Jehoiachin put off his prison garments. Along the journey of life there will be some unpleasantness and some confinement. Exile will be long. But with one's heart steeped in faith in God and with his feet in the footsteps of Jesus Christ there are freedom and release for those who will take them. Therefore take off prison garments now.

WORTH QUOTING (Continued from Page 9

had snowballed from 1947 on, after he had become Chaplain of the Senate.

"How often I've stood by," I said to Mother, "and heard someone say to Peter in one moment, 'Dr. Marshall, please don't overdo. You must take care of yourself. We need yo so . . .' And then in the very next mo ment, plead with him to speak t their pet group. Their organizatio was always different; their grou should always be the exception. Ho selfish can human beings be?"

Then having struck out at people, I
hed out again at God. "Why?"
ny did it have to end this way?" I
ed bitterly. "Have Peter and I
en duped? Has everything that
er preached been pious nonsense?
God is a God of love and has the
wer to help us, why didn't He do
nething about Peter's heart?"
Sorely troubled, Mother watched
and groped for words that might
p. Yet she knew her words would
ke little difference at the moment.
was enough that she was there to
en. She knew that every bitter
ught — against myself and other
ple and God — needed to come
and out.
She understood my need for an
swer to my agonizing question ...
ere is the God of love who cares
ut the individual in what has hap-
ned? She knew that if this ques-
n were not faced and answered,
re could be no healing of my
ised heart; that without an an-
er, I would then be forced either
flee life or to live it on a busy-
sy level, dragging an anesthetized
irit after me. She knew that my
at need was still to be oriented
God, centered in Him, so that my
e would have an anchor. But she
o knew that this could not be
ced.
"In God's own time," she told me
ietly, "you will get God's answers."
Catherine Marshall in **To Live Again**

* * *

Wherever one goes in the world, be
to the highlands or the lowlands,
e woodlands or the open plains, the
melands or far-away places, there
always beauty in abundance — ex-
isite, inspiring — but always differ-
t.
I have often thought that God
ade it that way — made it different
challenge the best in man — made
different to encourage him to travel
d to mingle with people in various
aces in the world — to the end that
an, seeing the beauty of Nature in other places, might sense that there are beauty and truth and goodness in his fellowman in other lands even though he may live under vastly different conditions and keep the "strangest" customs and traditions.

—Charles G. Tennent

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Christian truth does not depend upon the continued existence of Western Civilization — though, heaven knows, a Communist victory that could arise from the Christian West's inability to meet hydrogen atrocity with hydrogen atrocity would put Christians to a test so severe that it defies imagination. But is this not the gamble we take by accepting Christ in the first place? Is it not always true that the forces of evil have the "advantage" of an unrestricted choice of weapons, whereas the children of light are always bound by moral considerations and restrictions? Let us face these facts honestly and with determination, so that we may be prepared to meet even this terrible challenge. Only in this way can we be sure that we will never find ourselves in the position so many of our German brethren did of wreaking death and destruction on others in the Mystical Body of Christ — in a war they recognized to be unjust.

—Gordon C. Zahn

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Ernest Lefevre in **Ethics and United States Foreign Policy** accents the irony of our moral dilemmas ... situations "of incongruity in which the best efforts of men are mocked, seemingly by chance or accident." But, says Reinhold Niebuhr, we would find it is not just chance if we probed deeply enough. In these ironic situations we will find that when virtue becomes a vice it is often because there is some hidden defect in the virtue; when strength becomes weakness it is because the mighty man or nation succumbs to vanity; when security is transformed into insecurity it is because too much

reliance has been placed on security; when wisdom becomes folly it is because the "wise" do not know the limits of their wisdom.

In tragedy the fatal flaw is conscious — Hamlet knew what he was doing; in irony of the kind Mr. Lefevre has in mind the weakness derives from hidden defects, not conscious resolution . . . Policy has to be rooted in the fact that many men are not men of good will and that some who could not conceivably be so described actually control the political choices good men must make.

—John Cogley "Commonwael" Jan. 10, 1958.

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Many laymen have a kind of stereotyped view of the scientist as an inhuman, completely objective and rational sort of person, who only takes into account facts and is not swayed by feelings and emotions in his judgments. Unfortunately, there is little truth in such a picture. Scientists, especially when they leave the particular field in which they have specialized, are just as ordinary, pig-headed and unreasonable as anyone else, and their unusually high intelligence only makes their prejudices all the more dangerous because it enables them to cover these up with an unusually glib and smooth flow of high-sounding talk.

—H. J. Eyesenck, British phychologist

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A little girl was playing with some pennies on the porch of her home. After moving them around for quite a time, she called excitedly to her father, "Look, Daddy, I'm making a design with my money." Sure enough, she was. She had arranged the pennies in the form of a square. Those words bring into view the high possibility we have, that of making a design with our money. We can make it in the "design" of a cup of cold water held out to the needy, or the design of a cross of self-sacrifice.—Halford E. Luccock.

If you read biography it is signif cant to note that most of those wh achieved greatly did it because the bounced back after hard blow Douglas Freeman, whose biographie of George Washington and Robert E Lee are among the best, notes tha Washington had to bounce back afte a hard blow. Freeman describes th experience of Washington in 175 defeated at Fort Necessity. There h was accused of beginning an actio before reinforcements could arrive s that he could claim all the credit fo himself. It looked like the end of th road for Washington, but, Freema wrote, "Just when one is about t exclaim about some mistreatmen 'What an outrage,' one reflects an says instead, 'What a preparation'

St. Paul's "thorn in the flesh," recurring illness that often laid hi low, turned out to be a glorious prep aration for the discovery of spiritu power.

Look back into your own life an you will find disappointments an hurts, failures and frustration th seemed outrageous at the time. Hov ever, when you think of them no you can say, "What a preparatio for what was to come." In a strang way the rugged roads you had t travel yesterday prepared you to me what you must today.

—Harold Blake Walker

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Amusements will help you forg things; religion will help you su mount things.

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Too many people never travel f because they plot their course by las itude and loungitude.

—J. Jenkins

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When your religion gets into th past tense, it becomes pretense.

—Survey Bulletin

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The bulk of mankind by dint feeling free become spiritually unem ployed.—Ortega y Gasset.